

Public Testimony to the Joint Health and Human Services Appropriations Sub-Committee

Madam chair and members of the Committee, my name is David Eaton and I'm the Director of Counterpoint, Inc. in Livingston. We provide an array of services to adults with disabilities in Park County.

I am here today to explain why I support the rate increases recommended by the state consultant for agencies providing service to individuals with developmental disabilities.

In Counterpoint's case there are two primary reasons to support the recommendation:

1. The cost of doing business continues to increase.

From FY07 to FY08:

*Employee Expenses and Benefits increased 14.5%.

*Utilities increased 7%.

*Building repair and maintenance increased 64.5%

*Gas and oil increased 27.5%

*Consultant and professional fees increased 78%

~~*Other miscellaneous expenses increased 107.5%~~

And

*The projected cost of our worker's compensation insurance premium increased by 28% from FY08 to FY09.

2. The necessity of increasing staff compensation.

Despite the fact that we were able to increase wages by 7% in 2007 our current entry level wage is still only \$9.31/hour. Our staff turnover rate from 2005 to 2007 averaged 35%. We need to increase compensation so that we are able to pay a livable wage which will help us attract and retain quality staff members. People with disabilities in Montana require quality services and supports from qualified, well-trained staff.

I urge the Committee to adequately fund the rate system as per the recommendation of the state consultant. I want to thank the Committee in advance for the help we are requesting.

Respectfully submitted,

David Eaton
Executive Director
Counterpoint, Inc.